

Reviews of Recent Books

Vitamins in Theory and Practice (fourth edition), by Leslie J. Harris, Cambridge University Press, 1955, pp. 366, \$6.50.

This is a thoroughly delightful book. What is more, it manages to be highly entertaining while remaining "scientific." Physicians who are wont to scorn any piece of writing which is not exclusively intelligible to members of their profession (and one sometimes wonders if even . . .) will be utterly disarmed by Dr. Harris.

As for the "common reader," the author neither discourages his curiosity by overburdening him with minutiae, nor encourages his complacency by oversimplification. The boy who said in a book review that the volume told him "more than he wanted to know" about its subject would have no reason to complain of this succinct but thorough presentation of a fascinating topic. For here, copiously illustrated, is "what everyone should know" about the vitamins: how they were discovered, who unravelled their mysteries, what they do in the body, what happens when they are not supplied. The whole exciting story of vitamin research and the gradual conquering of deficiency diseases is laid before the reader, and the "morals" are drawn in terms he can apply to his own nutritional habits.

Let physicians and patients alike make haste to lay hands on this lively volume. And let tired biochemists, pondering their structural formulae, look to Dr. Harris and find themselves more glamorous than they thought.

C.-J. H.

Diseases of the Liver and Biliary System, by Sheila Sherlock, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1955, pp. 720, \$10.00.

The liver is the central organ of metabolic functions. It is situated athwart between the intestinal tract and the "internal milieu" of the organism and, as such, it is and must be greatly influenced by nutritional factors. The present book is "a comprehensive and up-to-date account of diseases of the liver and biliary system," written mainly for "physicians, surgeons and pathologists and also as a reference book for the clinical student." Its author, Sheila Sherlock, is one of the foremost students of the liver, with a wide clinical knowledge and outstanding originality in studying the many aspects of the pathology and function of the liver and its accessory organs. Sherlock points out the dietary implications in the many physiologic and

pathologic functions of the liver with great understanding and proper clinical appraisal. The most recent observations of the author's group on the deleterious effect of high protein intake in decompensated liver are of especial interest and in full accord with similar observations of C. S. Davidson and his associates at the Boston City Hospital.

Dr. Sherlock's book belongs on the bookshelf of physicians, surgeons, nutritionists, and physiological chemists interested in the physiology and pathology of the liver. It will remain a standard book for many years.

P. GYÖRGY

Nutrition for Practical Nurses, by Phyllis S. Howe, W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia and London, 1955, pp. 174, \$2.50.

Practical nurses are being given more and more responsibility for the bedside care of people who are ill in the hospitals and in the homes of our nation. It is often the duty of the practical nurse to prepare, serve, and feed a nutritious and suitable diet to her patient. For good patient care, this nurse needs to be convinced that good diet is a necessity for recovery from illness. She must know how to provide the essential nutrients in attractive meals that will be tempting to even the poorest appetites. As a reference for the practical nurses and a guide for their teachers we have needed a simple nutrition manual written especially for this group. In this book, the author attempts to provide such a textbook. Unfortunately, she does not relate the theoretical material presented to the work of the practical nurse.

The practical nurse who reads this book will learn to pronounce and define many of the technical terms used by dietitians. She will be exposed to a smattering of an oversimplified version of the chemistry and physiology of normal nutrition, the medical basis of a very few therapeutic diets, and the scientific principles concerning the selection, preparation, and care of basic food products.

Practical nurses might use this book to cram for State Board Examinations. They will neither enjoy reading it, nor will it stimulate them to prepare more nutritious, attractive meals for the patients. It will do little to motivate them to improve their own eating patterns. Nutritionists and dietitians will question the accuracy of many of the statements and overgeneralizations. They will be disturbed to find the "Basic Seven" presented as the one and only formula for planning adequate meals. Most of all, they will

regret that Miss Howe just missed supplying them with the readable, accurate, inspiring nutrition text that we need for our practical nurse students.

MILDRED KAUFMAN

The Low Sodium Cook Book, by A. S. Payne and D. Callahan, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1953, pp. 477, Bound, \$4.50; Paper (Sunkist Growers Spec. Ed.), \$1.25.

This book, as its title implies, is primarily a cook book, but it contains much other information as well for the person who must be on a restricted-sodium diet. In addition to tables presenting the sodium, cholesterol, and fat content of various foods, and sources of supply of dietetic foods, there is a discussion of the principle of the restricted-sodium diet. Suggestions for carrying out such a diet in the home are given in considerable detail.

The book is written in a chatty manner directed to the patient himself. It is designed to be used in conjunction with a specific diet as prescribed by a physician. The material is authoritative and on the whole accurate, within the limits of our knowledge of the sodium content of foods at the time the book was prepared. It is questionable whether the accuracy implied by the calculation of the content of recipes to one decimal place for milligrams of sodium and grams of fat is warranted.

The average patient may find the form of the recipes and the detailed explanations given somewhat confusing and few patients would be able to use the book without the initial guidance of a dietitian. However, the patient who is above average in intelligence, with an interest in preparing attractive meals restricted in sodium, will find this cook book a welcome addition to his kitchen library. Physicians and dietitians should find material in this book helpful to the instruction of their patients.

DORIS JOHNSON

Yearbook of Endocrinology, edited by G. S. Gordon, The Year Book Publishers, Chicago, 1955, pp. 392, \$6.00.

The value of the Year Book Series for practitioners and clinical investigators is well exemplified by this volume on endocrinology. Not only is one provided with a ready reference for the significant contributions in this field and an adequate, practical summarization of the original article, but also there are excellent integrations and discussions throughout the volume. The relative merits of the reports contained in the volume are presented in the light of previous knowledge and related to current developments in the field. The interesting work of the editor and his associates supplies much of the material used in the evaluation of the abstracts. In the section on the adrenal gland, Drs. Leutcher and Curtis review the current status of aldosterone. This is followed by four articles on this subject. In another special article Dr. Bern-

stein deals with "Autotransplantation of Adrenal Cortex to Portal Circulation Combined with Adrenalectomy and Oophorectomy in Treatment of Metastatic Carcinoma of the Breast." The sections on adenohypophysis, thyroid, parathyroids and calcium metabolism, and carbohydrate metabolism detail the important advances in these aspects of endocrinology. The nutritionist will find this volume useful because of the references to the metabolism of foods, minerals, and substrates in relation to the endocrines.

C. R. SHUMAN

1955 Medical Progress, edited by M. Fishbein, The Blakiston Division, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1955, pp. 364, \$5.00.

This is the third volume of a series which present a yearly compendium of advances in medicine and surgery prepared by prominent teachers and physicians in their respective branches. The 1955 edition contains 20 chapters on a wide variety of topics, including many of the medical subspecialties. A chapter on nutrition by Shull, Davis, and Stare of the Harvard School of Public Health will be helpful in orienting the practitioner in the status of recent work in this aspect of medicine and surgery. Nutrition is referred to as "the single most important environmental factor affecting health" and is discussed in relation to atherosclerosis, coronary artery disease, and dental caries. Intravenous fat therapy, fructose in diabetes mellitus, and the roles of molybdenum, pyridoxine, and pantothenic acid are also reviewed in this section, which is limited in scope to the principal interests of its authors. Brief references are made to nutritional and dietetic factors in certain other chapters such as those dealing with liver disease, gout, and diabetes. The usefulness of the book is only slightly limited by the inability of several contributors to present a broad coverage of their respective fields; in general, most topics are admirably and succinctly surveyed.

C. R. SHUMAN

The Foreseeable Future, by Sir George Thomson, Cambridge University Press, 1955, pp. 166, \$2.50.

It is interesting to see how large a part this physicist assigns to biology in his "foreseeable future." Perhaps this is because further sophistication will have to depend on understanding and applying the more subtle processes of living organisms; these seem to involve "laws" as yet unknown and not reducible to the major principles of the universe by which physics and chemistry can be elucidated. Even if we cannot wholly understand the functions of living organisms, we can make use of them in new ways and, in some cases, imitate them. Thus Sir George sees the airplane wing becoming more flexible, "more like that of a bird," bridges, buildings, and other structures becoming "more like biological ones," biological methods of concentration—by sea-animals or plants—used to extract the rarer elements from sea-



water, climates altered by judicious planting, and so on.

Advance must always depend upon three factors: knowledge, energy, and materials. In the case of maintaining an adequate food supply for an increasing population, all three are involved. Biological research could develop better crops for potentially fertile tropical regions now sparsely inhabited. Ways could be found to freshen salt water for irrigation of deserts. Plants could be grown in water. The physical state of soils could be much improved by biologic or synthetic methods, preferably the former. Cheaper food, such as algae, could be grown for animal feeding, leaving more cereal foods for human consumption and increasing the supply of animal food. Even without new knowledge, there are possibilities for making better use of present resources. Why, asks Sir George, have we domesticated no new animals since the remote past? Why shouldn't monkeys be taught to pick fruit or other crops? And why do we limit ourselves to beef, mutton, and pork? "Surely some enterprising company or country should find it worth while to popularize antelope or bear."

Nobel Laureate for physics, the author lets us into his own field and invades ours with an impartial interest and intelligence rare in our age of specialization. Thus he considers the new (and older) sources of energy and power; methods of strengthening materials and developing new ones; the problems of communication and transportation (including, of course, space travel!); the prospects for weather and climate control; the possibilities of deliberate mutations; medicine's role in forestalling senility; the implications of computing machines; and the social changes we can anticipate in our altered world.

It is pleasant to report that Sir George's respect for living organisms extends to the human being, which, he says, "so vastly exceeds anything we are ever likely to be able to make." It is up to the human brain—and certainly not beyond its capacities—to insure that we shall actually see the future Sir George foresees so optimistically.

C.-J. H.

Books received for review by the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* are acknowledged in this column. As far as practicable, those of special interest are selected, as space permits, for a more extensive review.

Clinical Biochemistry (4th ed.), by A. Cantarow and M. Trumper. W. B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia, 1955, pp. 738, \$9.00.

Progress in the Chemistry of Fats and Other Lipids. Vol. 3, edited by R. T. Holman, W. O. Lundberg, and T. Malkin. Pergamon Press, London and New York, 1955, pp. 475, \$10.50.

Mental Hygiene in Public Health (2nd ed.), by P. V. Lemkau, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1955, pp. 486, \$8.00.

The Thyroid. A Fundamental and Clinical Text, edited by S. C. Warner. Hoeber-Harper, New York, pp. 789, \$20.00.

Vitamins and Hormones. Advances in Research and Application. Vol. XIII, edited by R. S. Harris, G. F. Marrian, and K. V. Thimann. Academic Press Inc., New York, 1955, pp. 382, \$9.00.

How to Reduce Surely and Safely, by H. Pollack with A. D. Morse, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1955, pp. 157, \$2.95.

Nationalistic Malnutrition

"The disadvantages of the food customs of impoverished Orientals have been emphasized in Western medical literature. The low-protein, low-caloric diet increases the spread of tuberculosis, decreases the resistance against most communicable diseases, favors the development of liver cirrhosis, transforms anchylostomiasis from a relatively harmless infestation to a dangerous disease. All this certainly clamors for correction and improvements. Nevertheless, the Oriental may also ponder the desirability of radical changes of the diet in the United States where, due to nutritional influences, so much gout, serious diabetes, obesity, gall stones, renal stones, amyloidosis, and premature coronary sclerosis occur. This might sound preposterous to our ears, but only because most people are adamant as far as their food preferences and aversions are concerned. No nation is willing to concede that its national diet may be lacking in certain important ingredients. The Occidentals are just as proud of their blatantly excessive food intake as the Orientals are of their semistarvation diets."

—I. Snapper. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 63: 92, 1955.